

**CITY OF WOBURN
WOBURN CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL PERMITS COMMITTEE
WOBURN CITY HALL
COMMITTEE ROOM
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2024 – 6:04 p.m.**

Voting members present: Chairman Darlene Mercer-Bruen, Councilor Lou DiMambro, Councilor Charles Viola, Councilor Joanne Campbell, and Councilor Joseph Demers

Non-voting members present: President Jeffrey Dillon, Councilor Robert Toro, Councilor William Pappalardo, and Councilor Robert Ferullo.

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Reading and approval of meeting minutes of September 9, 2024: Motion made by Councilor Campbell and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to waive the reading of and approve the minutes of the previous meeting; in favor, 4-0.

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STA Properties at 56 Dragon LLC for a special permit under Section 7.3 and Section 5.1(57b), of the WZO, to allow for: 1. The extension or alteration of pre-existing, non-conforming use at the premises; and 2. Accessory overnight parking, at 56 Dragon Court: Representing the petitioner were Attorney Keri M. Armstrong, Johnson & Borenstein, 12 Chestnut Street, Andover, MA; and Shawn Armstrong, 56 Dragon Court LLC. Chair Mercer-Bruen said the applicant is seeking to move his audio-visual business to 56 Dragon Court. She said the applicant has supplied the committee with a parking plan and photos of the vehicles associated with the business. She said there is a relevant letter from the Planning Director to the council. Motion made by Councilor Campbell and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to suspend the City Council's rules to allow any member of the council not on the committee to address the petition; approved, 4-0. Chair Mercer-Bruen said the applicant is seeking a special permit for the overnight parking of commercial vehicles. She said the applicant has represented employees of the company will be picking up product and leaving the site. Councilor Viola arrived at 6:06 p.m. Chair Mercer-Bruen said she knows the applicant has been in business in Malden for approximately 20 years. She thanked the applicant for providing pictures of the vehicles. Motion made by Councilor Campbell and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to receive and make part of the permanent record seven photos submitted by the applicant depicting vehicles associated with

the business; approved, 5-0. Chair Mercer-Bruen said she has questions about the showroom associated with the business. Attorney Armstrong said her client is seeking to move the business because it has outgrown its current location. She said there has been a years-long search for an adequate location. She said this location works because their vehicles can pop right on and off the highway. She said the Dragon Court site is also close to their home in Reading. She said on a typical day the employees would load the company vehicles and head out for the entire day. She said there are one or two full-time employees who are office staff and would remain on-site. She said those employees would come and stay. She said very few people will be in the building at any given times. She said the showroom is more of a demonstration area. She said in the past 4-5 years they have had maybe six customers in the showroom. She said the showroom is currently in their home. She said it will not involve people coming and going every day. She said it is not a retail outlet. She said she wants to make sure the City Council knows the reason the company is coming to Woburn is because the business has grown. She said she does not want to imply the business does not want to continue to grow after it moves. She said they want to be honest up front. She said hopefully the business will continue to grow. Chair Mercer-Bruen said she appreciates the applicant being up front. She said she wants to make sure the applicant knows the building in which they are seeking to locate is accessed through a residential area. Councilor DiMambro said he took a ride to the site today. He said he wanted to see what the traffic was like at 8:30 a.m. He said from what he saw, there were quite a few Eversource employees and people commuting to the industrial buildings. He said they are larger buildings. He said Comerichs seems to occupy three or four buildings. He said the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a building but he is not sure what is in there. He said the parking seems at 56 Dragon Court to be fairly limited. He said there is also a loading dock, and that concerns him. He said he is concerned there are going to be tight for tractor-trailers. He said angle parking might be a challenge in front of the building. He said he did an aerial view and counted 675 parking spaces in the industrial lot. He said the business with the fewest spaces was 10. He said if the applicant's business has five vans and three employees who are there during the day it's not much of a stretch to say it's doable. He said he thinks the applicant's parking lot could accommodate 12 vehicles. He said he would be in support of this right now. Chair Mercer-Bruen asked Councilor DiMambro to expand on the experience he had as he was leaving the industrial area. Councilor DiMambro said as he was leaving he was traveling about 15-18 mph there was a vehicle speeding down the street. He said the speeder passed his full-size pickup truck despite the presence of an oncoming vehicle. He said he finds that kind of interesting. He said he understands how the residents of that neighborhood see a lot of craziness with traffic. He said he does not foresee an issue with the applicant's company, though. He said he was aware of the traffic situation. He said he was warned. Councilor Campbell asked if the applicants will be doing showroom events. Mr. Armstrong said the showroom is primarily by appointment only. He said the showroom space probably isn't going to be much bigger than the Committee Room. He said they will also do some training with staff and vendors. He said he cannot foresee there ever being more than 30 people in the building. He said the showroom will be more of a place to show customers how they operate. He said the premises will be mostly storage and office space and an area for loading and unloading. He said his guys come in around 7 a.m., leave by 7:30 a.m. and come back between 4-6 p.m. He said they clean up and head out. Councilor Campbell said 30 people is not a huge event. Councilor Demers said based on the 1981 parking plan it looks like the applicant will be using 21 spaces. Attorney Armstrong said that is what they wanted. She said they will be only using five spots for overnight parking. Councilor Toro said his

main concerns are traffic and overnight parking. He said the Planning Board determined this use is less intrusive than the prior use. He said the availability of 21 spots seems like it gives the applicant adequate room for growth. He said the applicant would have to come back for more overnight parking. He said he supports small businesses coming to Woburn. He said he has an idea of what the applicant is looking to do. He said the applicant has his support. Councilor Demers asked the applicant to give the committee an idea of how often the applicant receives shipments of hardware. Mr. Armstrong said there are shipments every day from FedEx and UPS. He said there is the occasional tractor-trailer delivery for TVs. He said that will happen once or twice a month. President Dillon said he drove down there today. He said he is familiar with that area because he used to work at Chomerics as a tin knocker. He said there has always been a commercial route through a residential area. He said it is a public road. He said as a route for UPS and other delivery services, his wife and daughter probably get as many deliveries as these businesses. He said it looks like the applicant will be a good fit in the building. He said he can see more obtrusive uses going in there. He said he understands the residents' concerns but the area has traditionally been commercial. Chair Mercer-Bruen said she has spoken to the Building Commissioner about the 1981 site plan. She said the Building Commissioner does not think there have been many changes to the building since then. Mr. Armstrong said the only thing he can see doing to the building is putting in a stairway to make the back more accessible. Chair Mercer-Bruen said based on that info, the Building Commissioner is satisfied. She said when we get to the part when conditions are added, she will insist that every parking space be numbered. She said that way if there is a complaint, then the Building Commissioner will know what area is being addressed. She said she also would like to add as a condition that the parking spaces will be striped. Referring to President Dillon's comments about deliveries, she said Amazon deliveries to her house 3-4 times a day. She said she would like to add a condition that there are no night deliveries. Mr. Armstrong said he has never had any complaints where he is now. Chair Mercer-Bruen said when a business wants to relocate to Woburn she always checks to see if there are any complaints in the town from which the business is coming. She said she inquired with Reading officials and there were no complaints about this business. Mr. Armstrong said 7-8 p.m. would be the latest there will be deliveries. Chair Mercer-Bruen said it is very important that the parking spaces are marked with the company's information, so if there are issues, people can see the name on the vehicle. Mr. Armstrong said all his vans and the one pickup truck that will be on-site are lettered. He said he gets three new vans every year. Chair Mercer-Bruen said she is considering some language about limiting big showroom events and training. She said there are only 24 parking spaces. She said she supports the petition with the understanding the neighbors in that area have gone through a lot. She said the area would not be zoned today as it is. She said Mr. Murray built a beautiful cul-de-sac and there are a lot of children in the neighborhood. She said she is not as concerned about the applicant's vehicles as much as she is about the big trailers. She said if the council is willing, she has a list of conditions that she would like to draft more carefully. She said she will work with the petitioner. She said she would prefer to send the matter back for action next Tuesday. She said she thinks the business is a good fit for the area. Councilor Toro said he wants to address two concerns. The first is what the company would consider a showroom event. He said the other issue is the use of the vans, of which he has no problem. He said he is in the construction industry and he would even be willing to consider the use of box trucks if it is more convenient. He said as long as the vehicles are similar he would have no problem. Chair Mercer-Bruen reiterated the all the vehicles associated with the business must be marked, but she is fine with saying similar vehicles. Mr. Armstrong said the biggest

vehicle is a box truck. He said vans are mostly what they use to operate. Motion made by Councilor Campbell and seconded by Councilor Demers to send the matter “back for action;” approved, 5-0.

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Motion made by Councilor Viola and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to adjourn; in favor, 5-0. Chair Mercer-Bruen adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees